

2021 Annual Conference

CONCLUDING PLENARY PANEL CONCEPT NOTE

Small States in Big Roles: The importance of Small Island Developing States' engagement within the United Nations Mechanisms

Maison de la Paix (Pétale 5) and Online (Zoom)

Thursday 12 October 2021, 16:00 – 17:30 (CET)

TOPIC

Today, the Presidency of the Human Rights Council is held for the first time by a representative of a Pacific Small Island State and of a Small Island Developing State, Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan of Fiji. In June 2021, Ambassador Abdulla Shahid, Foreign Minister of the Maldives, was elected with an overwhelming majority as President-elect of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), becoming the sixth person from a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) to hold the prestigious post. In June 2019, St. Vincent and the Grenadines became the smallest nation to secure a seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) assuming its presidency for November 2020. Earlier, Ambassador Inga Rhonda King had already served as 74th President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 2018.

A credit to multilateralism, these achievements offer an important opportunity for each of these states to share the unique perspectives, as well as the specific challenges faced by SIDS to the attention of the principal organs of the UN system. Recognizing that universal and meaningful participation is enhanced by strengthening the capacity of delegations of LDCs/SIDS to participate in its activities, the Human Rights Council adopted a [decision](#), on 24 March 2021, in which it decided to convene, during its forty-ninth session in March 2022, a High-Level Panel discussion on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of LDCs/SIDS. The decision was supported by a record of 160 UN Members States, making it the most sponsored Human Rights Council resolution/decision since its establishment in 2006.

This concluding panel will provide the opportunity to reflect on the good practices and lessons learned in securing the universal and meaningful participation of SIDS in the UN system. Acknowledging the unique challenges faced by SIDS, including financial and institutional constraints, the discussion will also look into ways to strengthen technical assistance and capacity building with a view to ensure the effective contribution of SIDS to the work of the UN, in particular the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms.

PANELISTS

- **H.E. Minister Abdulla Shahid**, President of the 76th session of the General Assembly and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Maldives (video message)
- **H.E. Ambassador Asim Ahmed**, Permanent Representative of the Maldives to the UN in Geneva
- **H.E. Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan**, Permanent Representative of Fiji to the UN in Geneva and President of the Human Rights Council
- **H.E. Ambassador Rhonda King**, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the UN in NY and President of the Security Council in November 2020

MODERATOR

- **Felix Kirchmeier**, Executive Director of the Geneva Human Rights Platform